

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES 2013-2014

Finance Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of Finance

Outcome/Program: 2/2.1

Topic: Medicare Chronic Disease Dental scheme – Waiver or Debts

Senator: Bushby

Question reference number: F51

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday, 17 January 2013

Number of pages: 2

Question:

1. In respect of how many dentists has the Department of Finance waived debts that arose due to non-compliance with the requirements of the Medicare Chronic Disease Dental Scheme?
2. In respect of how many dentists has the Department of Finance refused to waiver debts that arose due to non-compliance with the requirements of the Medicare Chronic Disease Dental Scheme?
3. On what date/s did the Department of Finance notify the Department of Human Services that these dentists were either successful in having their debts waived, or unsuccessful?
4. How many cases remain unassessed in part or full by the Department of Finance?
5. How long is that expected to be before all cases are fully assessed?
6. Has the Department considered advising the Department of Human Services to abandon the audit process?
7. How many Department of Finance staff are still working on the audit waiver process?
8. How many dedicated hours/days have staff spent on the audit and re-assessment process?
9. What does the Department of Finance estimate the audit process has cost to date?
10. Has there been any legal costs associated with the audit/re-assessment process? Please detail.

Answer:

1. As at 31 October 2013, 40 dentists' debts had been waived under section 34(1)(a) of the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997* (FMA Act) and 14 dentists' had their debts partially waived.
2. The Department of Finance (Finance) has not refused to waive any debts arising from the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme. As stated in respect to question one, 14 debts have been partially waived rather than fully waived.

3. The following table lists the date that decision letters were issued by Finance:

Date	Waived	Partial
31/10/2012	17	-
24/01/2013	20	-
18/03/2013	1	-
05/06/2013	1	-
25/07/2013	-	1
26/07/2013	-	3
14/08/2013	-	1
29/08/2013	-	3
03/09/2013	-	4
15/10/2013	-	1
26/10/2013	-	1
31/10/2013	1	-
Total:	40	14

4. As at 31 October 2013, Finance had 26 Chronic Disease Dental Scheme matters open.
5. Finance endeavours to deal with these matters in a timely manner so as to minimise delays and to provide fair treatment for claimants. The Department of Human Services must complete its audit and assessment process and then forward these matters to Finance before Finance can commence its work.
6. No.
7. The Department of Human Services has responsibility for the audits conducted under the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme. Finance's role is in respect to making assessments under the waiver of debt mechanism, as legislated in section 34(1)(a) of the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*.
8. As advised in response to question seven above, Finance officers are not involved in the audit and re-assessment process.
9. As advised in response to question seven above, Finance officers are not involved in the audit and re-assessment process. This question should be referred to Department of Human Services.
10. Finance has not incurred any legal costs in relation to the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme.